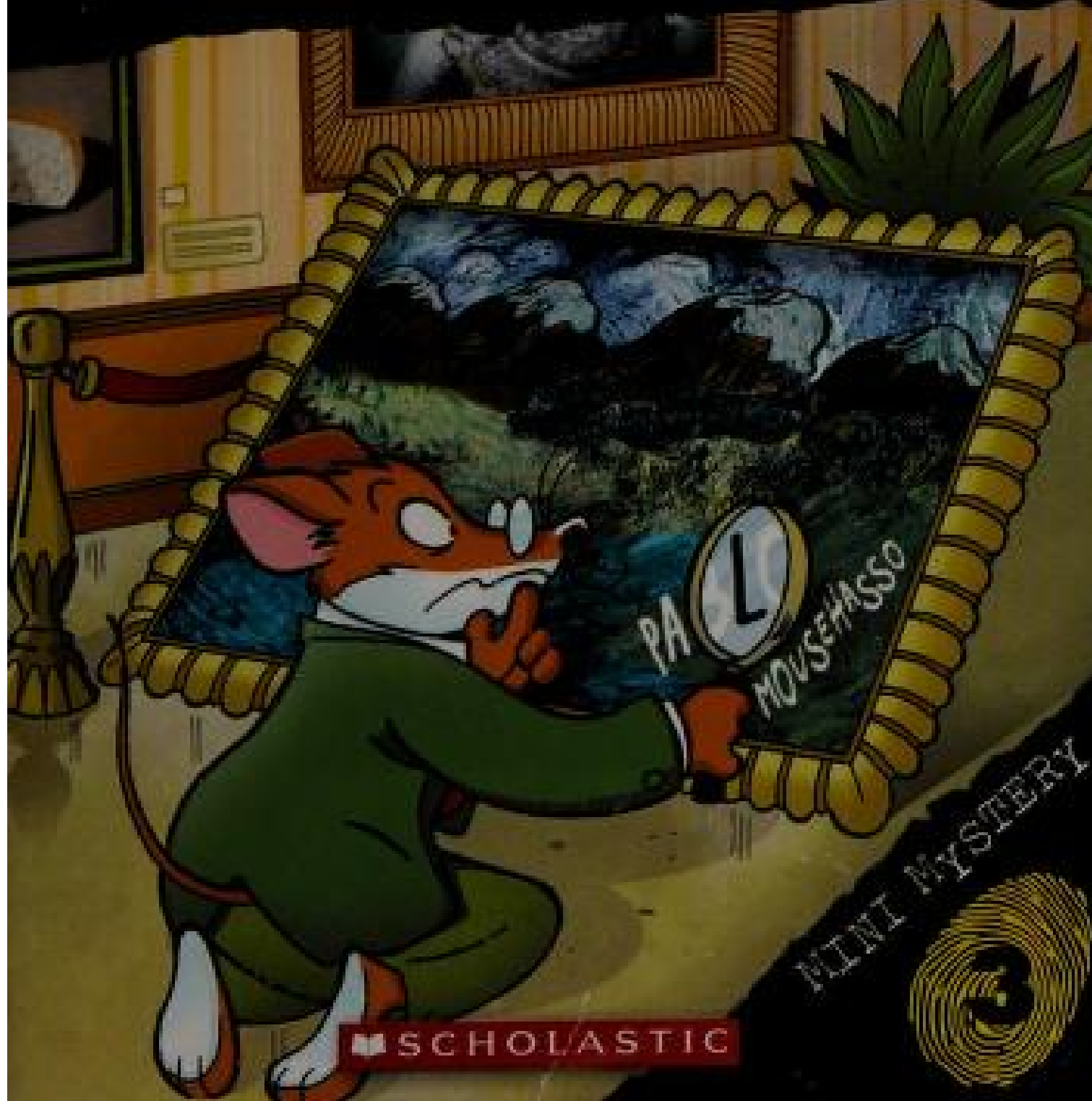




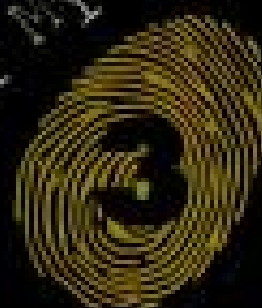
**Geronimo Stilton**

# THE MOUSE HOAX



**SCHOLASTIC**

MINI MYSTERY





Dear mouse friends,  
Welcome to the world of



Geronimo Stilton

MINI MYSTERY









*THE RODENT'S GAZETTE*  
EDITORIAL STAFF







**Geronimo Stilton**

A learned and brainy mouse; editor of *The Rodent's Gazette*



**Thea Stilton**

Geronimo's sister and special correspondent at *The Rodent's Gazette*



**Trap Stilton**

An awful joker; Geronimo's cousin and owner of the store Cheap Junk for Less



**Benjamin Stilton**

A sweet and loving nine-year-old mouse; Geronimo's favorite nephew



# Geronimo Stilton

## **THE MOUSE HOAX**



Scholastic Inc.



# A STRANGE LITTLE GIFT

It was a **busy** day at the office. The telephones wouldn't stop **ringing**!

"Hello?" I answered my **desk phone**.

"Mr. Stilton? It's Mitzy Mouserson. Remember me?"

"Yes?" I answered my **cell phone**.





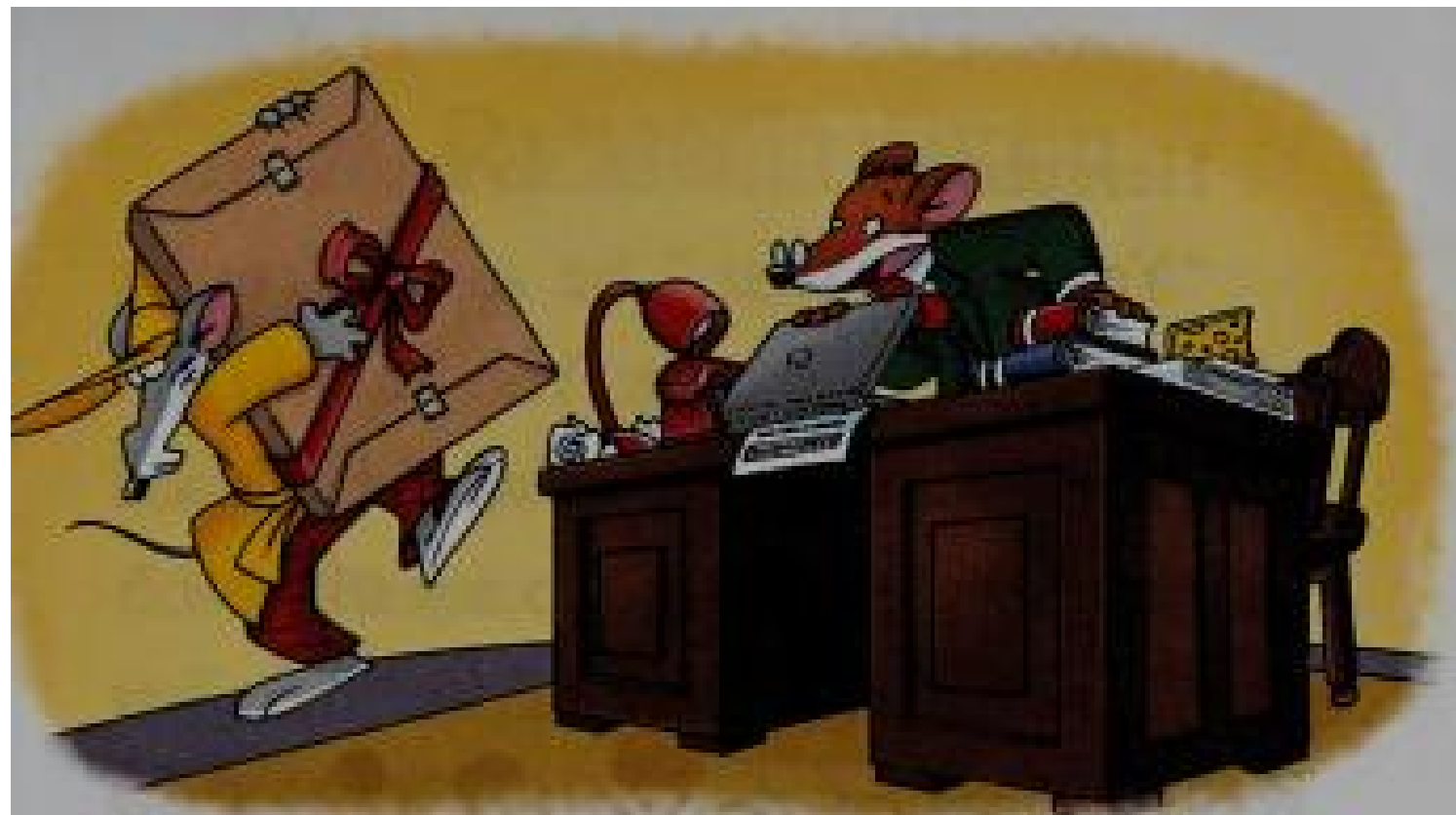
“Stilton, it’s Andrew Whitetail. About that manuscript . . .”

On top of the phone calls, every few minutes someone entered my office and I lost my **TRAIN** of thought. Oh, excuse me! I haven’t introduced myself. My name is Stilton, *Geronimo Stilton*, and I am the publisher of *The Rodent’s Gazette*, the most **famouse** newspaper on Mouse Island.

So, I was in my office when an **enormouse** package entered the room. A familiar snout poked out from behind it.

“**Happy birthday**, Stilton!”  
a voice shouted.





It was my friend Hercule Poirat, the famous detective.

“Birthday?” I repeated. “But **TODAY** isn’t my birthday!”

“Oh, well,” Hercule replied as he placed the package on my desk. “You should take the day off anyway!”

“Oh, I can’t,” I told him. “I have a **LOT** to do today.”



Hercule got **closer** to my desk.

“Yes, I see that,” he said. “You’re always here, working. You should get out more! A **change** would be good for you. Come with me to my **office**.”

My whiskers trembled at just the thought of the **flea-infested** shack Hercule calls his office. He is a complete **slob**, and his office is a total **disaster** area!

“I’m sorry, I can’t,” I told him quickly. “I really have to finish this article.”

Hercule sighed. “All right, Stilton. I’ll go. But first open the **little** gift I got you. Aren’t you even a little **curious** about what’s inside?”



# A REAL STINKER

Inside the package was a painting. It was no masterpiece. In fact, it looked like it had been painted by my little cousin **MESSY PAWS**, and he's just a baby! It was a real **stinker**!

In the lower right-hand corner were the painter's initials: **P.M.**

"Do you like it?" Hercule asked me.





“Er, yes, of course!” I replied. I didn’t want to offend him. “But it’s a bit . . . odd. Where did you get it?”

“A while ago, I met a rat who was down on his **luck**,” Hercule replied. “He gave it to me in exchange for some **BREAD** and **cheese**. Isn’t it great?”

At that moment, one of the new editors, **Katie Cheeseheart**, popped in.

“Are you ready for the **ARTEXHIBIT**?” she asked.

“Tonight is the opening, **remember?**”





# THE INVITATION TO THE SHOW

Oh, for the love of cheese! I had completely forgotten about the art show opening of the great painter **PABLO MOUSEHASO**.

“Petunia Pretty Paws called,” Katie told me. “She and Buggy Wugsy will be there.”

Ah, Petunia Pretty Paws! She is the most fascinating *rodent* I know. I have a **TEENY**, tiny crush on her.

“You can bring guests,” Katie reminded me.

“I’ll come!” Hercule said eagerly.



I sighed. Hercule is a very **good** friend, but whenever he's around, I end up in a **SEA** of trouble.

"Well, er, actually . . . I promised Benjamin I would take him," I replied.

Right at that moment, my dear little nephew **appeared**.

"Hi, **BENJAMIN!**" I exclaimed.

"Hi, Uncle G!" Benjamin said as he gave me a **huge** hug. "Is Hercule coming with us to the show? How nice!"

Hercule **winked** at me, and we all left together.





# A RATASTIC VILLA!

The show was in Master Mousechasso's house.

"This guy sure has a **ratastic** villa!" exclaimed Hercule.

"**Shhhhhh!**" I quieted him. "Do you want them to kick us out?"

At that moment, I heard the *sweetest* voice behind me.

"Hi, G!"

**It was Petunia Pretty Paws!**

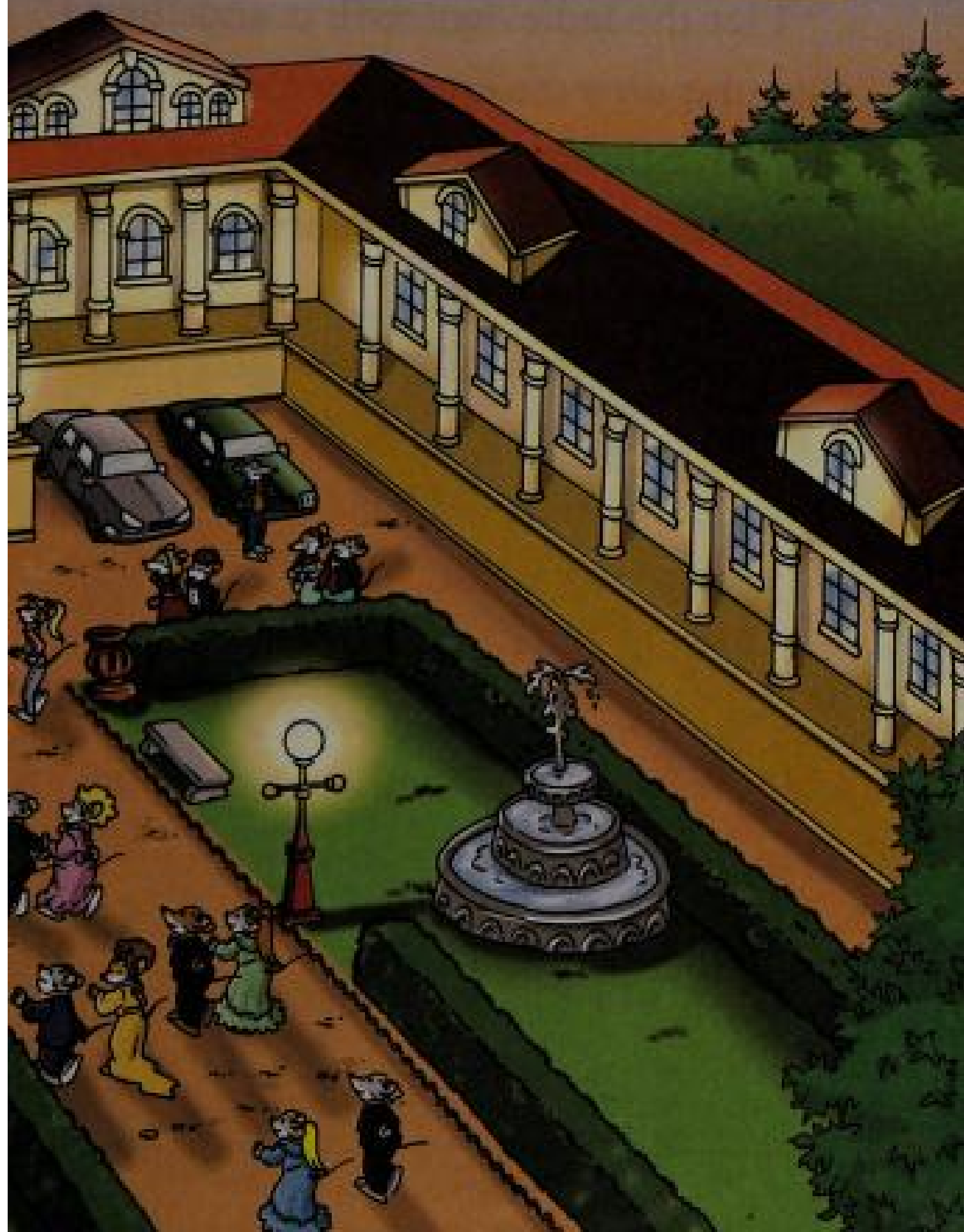
Then a little mouse with black **braids** jumped out at me and threw her arms around my neck — it was Buggy, Petunia's







# PABLO MOUSEHASSO'S VILLA





niece and Benjamin's **best friend**.

I let the ladies enter first and then I gave the *invitations* to the butler.

"Mr. Stilton!" the butler exclaimed. "What an **HONOR**. And are these other guests with you?"

"Yes, this is my **nephew** Benjamin," I replied. "And this, er, is the famous investigator Hercule Poirat."

Hercule was busy *waving* his magnifying glass in the butler's face.

My snout turned **purple** with embarrassment, but the butler didn't *twit* a whisker.

"Welcome," he said kindly. "Please **CLIMB** this main stairway. On the



second floor you will see the **BUFFET**.  
Have a good evening!”

“Thank you!” I replied, trying to smile  
through my embarrassment.

Hercule disappeared in the crowd.





I offered my arm to **Petunia**, and we climbed the main stairway that led to the second floor.

*I was on cloud nine!*





# THE GREAT MOUSEHASO

The main hall was full of people admiring the paintings that **hung** on the walls. In one corner, I saw a rodent surrounded by **photographers** and admirers. It was Master Mousehasso!

“I want to see if I can get a picture, too!” Buggy said as she showed off her **digital** camera with pride. “Come with me, Benjamin!”

“Can I, Uncle G?” Benjamin **squeaked**.

“Of course, Benjamin!” I said.

I was finally alone with Petunia when Hercule suddenly appeared, speaking







**loudly** as he was **snacking**.

“But . . . *chomp* . . . that guy . . .  
*chomp, chomp* . . . I . . . *chomp* . . .”

“Hercule!” I scolded. “You shouldn’t  
talk with your mouth **full**!”

He just laughed.

“While you fill your head with **art**,  
I fill my stomach with **food**!”

My snout turned **purple** with  
embarrassment.

He ignored me.

“Listen up, Stilton,” Hercule **whispered**.  
“This Mousehasso guy — I’ve seen him  
before, but I can’t **remember** where.  
I just might go over there and ask him.”

And he **disappeared** again!



Petunia turned to me and smiled  
*sweetly*.

“Why don’t we go and get something  
to eat?” she asked.

So we approached the **super-crowded**  
refreshment table.

I had just managed to get my paws  
on two Gorgonzola **tarts** when a  
rodent asked: “Do you like my work?”





# TARTS AND COUNTESSSES

The rodent stuck out his **PAW**.

“It’s very nice to **meet** you,” he said.

“I am Master **PABLO MOUSEHASSO**.”

“M-my name is Stilton, *Geronimo Stilton*,” I stuttered. I could hardly believe I was speaking with a master artist! “I am —”

“Oh, I know who you are!” he replied with a smile. “And I want to offer you an exclusive **interview** for your newspaper. What do you say?”

“That sounds **FABUMOUSE!**” I exclaimed. “When can we do it?”



“Right away!” he said. “Just follow me into my studio. Naturally, your **LOVELY** girlfriend can come with us!”

My snout turned **purple** with embarrassment. I haven’t yet had the courage to tell Petunia how I feel about her!



“Can our niece and nephew come, too?” Petunia asked.

“It would be a **pleasure** to meet them,” Mousehasso replied.





Meanwhile, Hercule was **approaching**. I didn't want him to see us: Who knew what kind of mess Hercule would get me into!



I turned red ...

But right as he was arriving, Mousehasso **mumbled** something and ran off.



... then green ...

"Taste this!" Hercule said as he shoved a tart into my mouth. The **TART** went down the wrong pipe, and I turned **RED**, then **green**, then as



... then as white as mozzarella!





**WHITE** as mozzarella.

Hercule **HIT** me really hard on the back until I spit out the tart. It flew across the room, hitting **Countess Snobella** in the back of the neck.



“How rude!” she shrieked, smacking me with a **CANE**.

“Oh, for the love of **bananas**!”



Hercule shouted. "Stilton, when will you learn to leave little **old** ladies alone?"



When she heard Hercule call her an old lady, Countess Snobella began **CHASING** after him instead. I sighed with **relief** and led Petunia out of the way.



# AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

The butler approached me.

“Mr. Stilton, the **MASTER** is waiting for you,” he said.

I called Benjamin and Buggy Wugsy, and **together** we all went into the studio.

“Shall we begin?” the **artist** asked.  
“I only have a few minutes.”

“Yes, of course,” I replied. “So, how did you become such a success?”

“It wasn’t easy,” Master Mousehasso said. “In the beginning, I never had much money or enough to eat. Sometimes I had to give away my paintings in exchange







for a bit of **BREAD** and **cheese**!”

**How strange!** That sentence sounded very familiar.

Mousehasso continued. “Because I remember my humble beginnings, I am organizing a charity **auction** of a few of my works the day after tomorrow. The proceeds will help **young** artists. I hope you can make it.”

“Oh, yes,” I replied.  
“It would be a great **HONOR.**”

Master  
Mousehasso  
rang a bell,  
and the butler





appeared with two **ENORMOUSE** packages.

Mousehasso gave one to **Petunia** and one to me.

“Don’t open them right away,” he instructed us. “It’s a **surprise!**”

“I don’t know how to **thank** you,” I said breathlessly.

“Oh, it’s nothing!” he replied. “I look forward to seeing you at the **auktion.**”

**What a scoop!**

I couldn’t wait to get back to my office to write my article.

**CLUE 1**

**Why did Master Mousehasso’s sentence seem familiar to Geronimo?**



# THE MASTER'S GIFT

The next day, copies of *The Rodent's Gazette* flew off the stands. Bugsy's **photos** came out so well that I published one on the front page.

As I was enjoying my success, the phone **rang**.

It was Petunia Pretty Paws.

"Hi, G," she said sweetly. "There's a beautiful horse **GALLOPING** in my painting. What's yours like?"

**For the love of cheese!** I hadn't opened my gift from the master yet!

"I'll look right now," I told Petunia.



THE RODENT'S GAZETTE

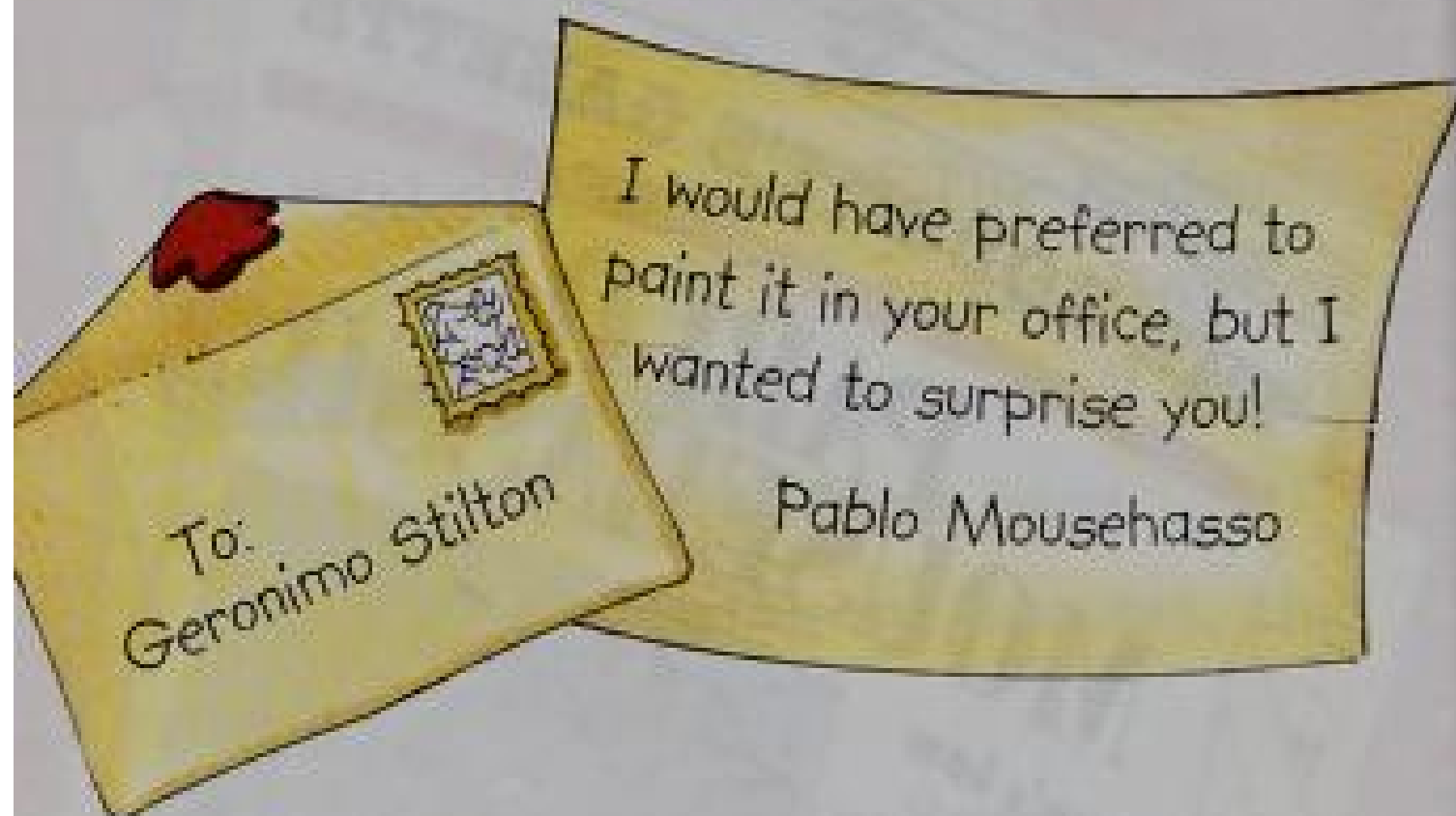
# PABLO MOUSEHASSO

"Here's how  
I became  
famous!"





First I read the note:



Then I opened the package.

**For the love of cheese!** It was me!

"So, G?" Petunia asked. "What is it?"

My snout turned **purple** with embarrassment. It's a good thing Petunia couldn't see me.



“Er, well . . . it’s a portrait of me,” I replied.

“**Really?**” Petunia asked. “I’ll come right over so I can see it. You don’t mind, do you?”

Mind? I was on **cloud nine!**

I hung the **PAINTING** facing my desk, right next to the painting Hercule had given me.

*Now this is a real masterpiece, I thought. It’s nothing like that **stinker!***

Then the door to my office suddenly **BURST** open.





# BREAD AND CHEESE

It was **Hercule Poirat**!

“Stilton!” he exclaimed. “I remembered where I’ve seen Mousehasso before! He was the rat who gave me the painting in exchange for some **BREAD** and **cheese**! He was such a **TERRIBLE** artist I don’t know how he ever got famous!”

“Well, he isn’t **TERRIBLE** anymore,” I said. “Look what he gave me.”

I pointed to the portrait **hanging** on the wall.

Hercule approached it with his **magnifying** glass.







“You put it right next to the stinker!” he exclaimed. “Didn’t you notice anything **STRANGE** about these two paintings?”

Hercule was right — how had I **missed** it?

## **CLUE 2**

**What did Hercule Poirat notice about the two paintings?**



# ARE YOU OKAY, G?

“The same mouse couldn’t have painted **both** of these,” I squeaked.

“It’s quite a **mystery**,” Hercule agreed.

At that moment, Buggy, Benjamin, and Petunia Pretty Paws came in.

“Are you okay, G?” Petunia asked.

“I just made an important discovery,” I told her. “**LOOK!** The **SIGNATURES** are similar. The initials in the corner of the painting Hercule gave me are the same as Pablo Mousehasso’s!”

“Hey, *I* made the **DISCOVERY!**”



Hercule protested.

Bugsy picked up a slip of paper from the **ground** and handed it to me.

"This fell," she said.

"Thanks," I replied. It was the master's *NOTE* to me.

"**MOLDY MOZZARELLA!**" I exclaimed in surprise. "Look at this **strange** writing on the back of the note!"

I held it out for my friends to see.





# THE ANAGRAM



“What does it mean?”

Hercule asked.

“It’s an **ANAGRAM**!”

Petunia exclaimed.

“A **telegram**?” Hercule replied.

“No, an anagram.” I explained, “It’s a game in which the letters of a word are **scrambled** and need to be put back in order.”

“Let’s figure it out!”



Bugsy said. "The first group of letters is **YBU**. What does that mean?"

I thought and thought.

"Um, UBY?" I suggested. "YUB?"

"**I'VE GOT IT!**" Hercule shouted.

"It spells **BUY**!"

"Nice work!" Benjamin and Bugsy exclaimed in **unison**. "Now we need to do the same thing with the other groups of letters to make a sentence."

## **CLUE 3**

**Try to solve the anagram.  
What sentence do you get?**



# THE CODED MESSAGE

The solution to the anagram:  
**BUY THE BLACK LETTERS**

I was **PERPLEXED**. “What does ‘buy the black letters’ mean?”

“I don’t think this sentence was *written* by the master,” Benjamin pointed out. “The handwriting looks *different*.”

“So someone else knew about the gift Master Mousehasso gave Uncle G,” observed Buggy. “And that mouse wrote a **code** message to let Uncle G know —”



“To buy the black letters!” Benjamin finished with **excitement**.

“They must be for sale if Geronimo is supposed to buy them,” Hercule **muttered**. “But who would be selling **BLACK LETTERS?**”

“I know!” exclaimed Petunia. “Tomorrow **morning** is Mousehasso’s charity auction at his villa.”



“Of course!” I agreed. “The master will be selling his **PAINTINGS** at the auction. Maybe the black letters will be for sale then!”



# THE CHARITY AUCTION

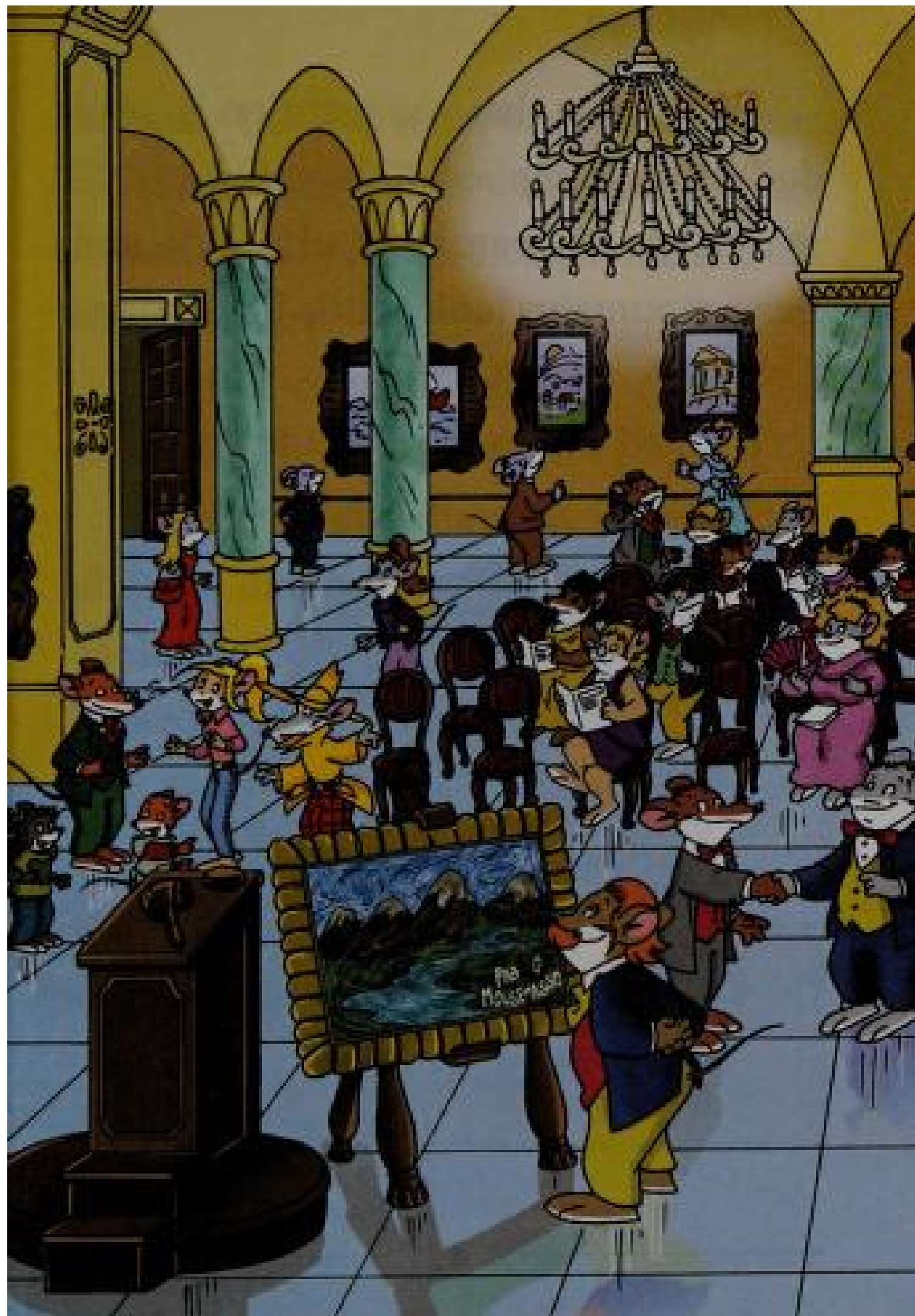
When we arrived at the **charity** auction at Pablo Mousehasso's villa the next morning, the butler handed us a **catalog** of all the paintings that were for sale. Then we walked around to take a **look** at them.

"If you notice anything **strange**, let me know!" Hercule told us.

We stopped in front of a painting of a lake surrounded by **snowcapped** mountains.

"Do you see anything odd in this painting?" Buggy Wuggy asked Hercule.







“Well, now that you mention it, yes I do,” Hercule replied. “Those **clouds** remind me of a banana **smoothie**, and those mountains look a little like banana **cakes!**”

I rolled my eyes. Hercule **LOVES**





bananas the way most mice love cheese.

“Hey!” Benjamin whispered. “I see something **strange**. Look in the bottom right corner!”

“But of course!” Hercule exclaimed **LOUDLY**.

I didn’t know what they were talking about. I didn’t see anything but Master Mousehasso’s **SIGNATURE**. But then I looked more closely.

**BUT OF COURSE!**

**CLUE 4**

**What did Benjamin see  
in the painting?**



# THE BLACK LETTERS

There was a black letter in the white signature! It had to be one of the **BLACK LETTERS**. But where were the **others**?

We didn't have time to look because the auction was about to **start**.

*"Psst,"* Hercule whispered. "Let's





look in the catalog and find the paintings with **BLACK** letters. **WE'LL BUY ALL OF THEM!**"

Finding the paintings was easy: There were **f i v e** of them!

"Soon we'll know what the author of the **MYSTERIOUS** note wanted to say!" Petunia said.

I had a sudden realization. "Who is going to **PAY** for all of these paintings?"

Benjamin gave me a pleading look.

"Won't **you**, Uncle?"

I could never say no to my **sweet** little nephew!

"Of course, Benjamin," I told him. "After all, there's a **mystery** to solve!"





Landscape  
40" x 27"

Lower left:  
Still Life of Fruit  
and Cheese  
20" x 35"

Lower right:  
Mousilda  
27" x 43"





# The Black Letters



Light and Sea  
50" x 25"



Red Flowers  
50" x 25"



# START YOUR BIDDING!

“Do you want some help **bidding**, Stilton?” Hercule asked.

“Oh, no!” I said.

“It’s no problem,” he replied. “I’ll just offer an amount that’s a little **too high** to make sure we get the painting!”

“**Absolutely not!**” I insisted, twisting my whiskers anxiously. “I’ll go **broke!**”

“Oh, fine.” Hercule pouted. “Do it your way!”

The first few **PAINTINGS** were not the ones with the black letters. We watched the other rodents bid.



**Holey cheese!** The prices were so high I almost fainted.

“Why are they raising their paws, Uncle?” Benjamin asked.

“To show the price they are willing to pay,” I replied. “Each raised paw means they are willing to pay **fifty dollars** more





than the previous rodent.”

“**Wow!**” Benjamin exclaimed. “Those are some expensive paintings!”

Finally, the painting with the banana cake-shaped mountains came up.



“The opening price for this **splendid** painting is five hundred dollars,” the auctioneer said.

“Ladies and gentlemen, start your bidding!”

**Five hundred dollars!** I was about to faint from the price, but I raised my paw anyway.

“Five hundred **DOLLARS** to the



gentlemouse in the back!”

A lady rodent in the first row raised her hand.

“Five hundred fifty **DOLLARS** to the lady in front!”

Several more rodents raised their paws. Suddenly, a waiter came in with a huge tray of banana cream **pastries**.





Hercule waved his arms to get the **waiter's** attention: He really **LOVES** bananas! But every time he raised his arm, the auctioneer raised the price!

I tried to stop him, but Hercule continued lifting his arms until, finally, we got the painting for . . .

**ONE THOUSAND  
DOLLARS!**



# ASTRONOMICAL PRICES

We still needed to buy **four** more paintings. And every time a **waiter** passed by with a tray of treats, Hercule raised his arm, **increasing** the price!

During bidding for the second painting, there was a tray of banana **muffins**.

**I was going broke!**

During bidding for the third painting, Hercule waved for the crispy banana chips.







THIRD PAINTING

**I was really going broke!**

During bidding for the fourth painting, the tray was full of **banana sundoes**.

**I was really, really going broke!**

During bidding for the fifth painting, I gave up.

**I was completely broke!**

But I was **happy** anyway. After all, the money was for a **good cause!**



FOURTH PAINTING



FIFTH PAINTING



## ANOTHER ANAGRAM

After the auction, we **RETURNED** to my house to study the **FIVE** paintings.

“So? Have you **discovered** anything?” asked Petunia.

“Well, the black letters are **L, M, E, H, P,** and **E,**” Hercule replied.

“We knew that just by looking at the catalog!” said Benjamin.

“Yes, but we hadn’t figured out that it was another kilogram!” explained Hercule.

“You mean another **ANAGRAM,**” I told Hercule. “What do the letters spell?”



“Let’s try rearranging them a few different ways,” Benjamin suggested.

“H-E-E-L-M-P?” I suggested.

“M-E-E-P-H-L?” Bugsy tried.





# HELP ME!

Hercule nibbled his way through **five** bananas and drank **two** banana smoothies as we worked.

“Maybe it’s two words,” Benjamin said. “Otherwise there are a lot of consonants.”

“I figured it out!” Hercule shouted. “The letters spell **HELP ME!**”

“‘Help me’?” I asked in astonishment. “Someone must be in **trouble!**”

“Who could it be?” asked Bugsy.

Hercule was so excited that he accidentally spilled his smoothie on one



of the paintings. The paint **smeared** as he wiped it off.

“Look at this!” exclaimed Petunia.

A **hidden** picture had appeared.

“It’s part of a **MAP!**” Buggy realized.

“But it’s **incomplete.**”

“I think I know where the rest of the map is,” said Benjamin. “Hercule, can you wipe off the other paintings?”

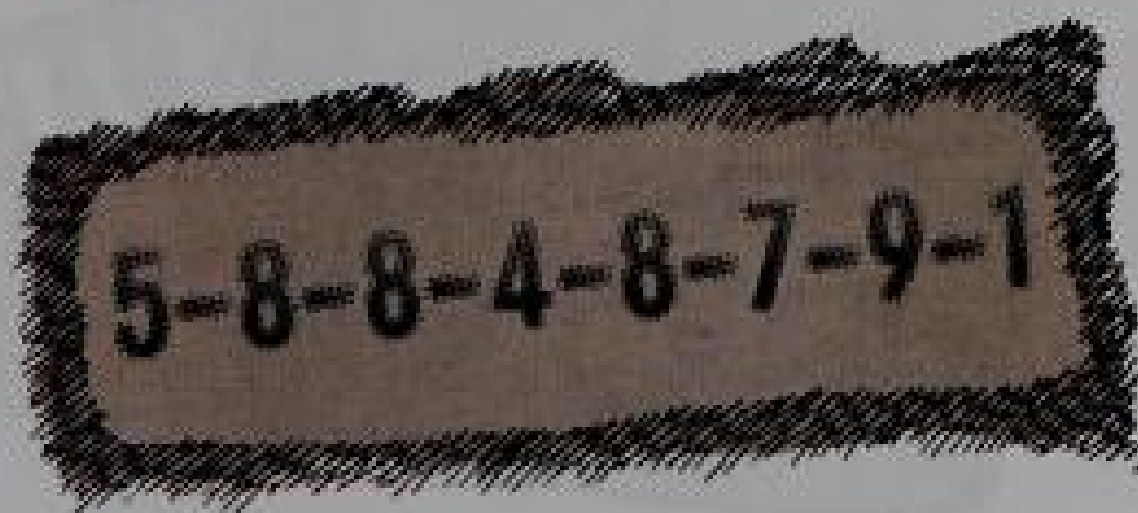




# THE MAP

Hercule didn't need to be asked twice: He happily **spilled** the smoothie on all the paintings to reveal the **pieces** of the map. One of the paintings, however, didn't seem to have a part of the map. **How strange!**

Hercule inspected every inch of the canvas until he discovered an eight-digit **number** in the corner.



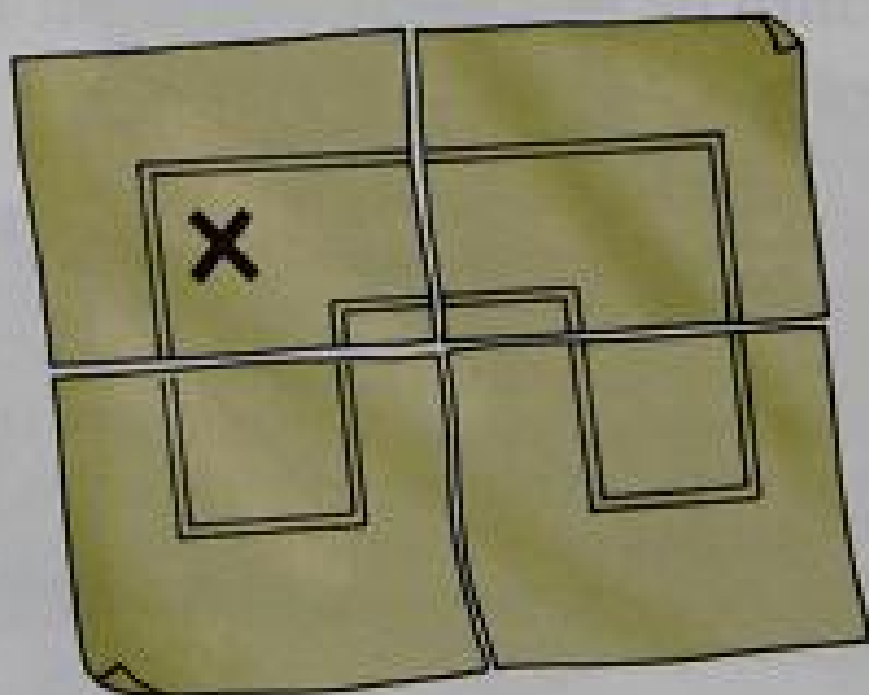


“What do these numbers mean?”  
Petunia asked.

“**I don’t know**, but we’ll figure it out!” Benjamin replied.

Meanwhile, Hercule put all the pieces of the map **TOGETHER**. The map’s shape looked very familiar. I felt as though I had been to the place in the drawing. But **WHERE** was it?

Suddenly, Buggy and **BENJAMIN**





exclaimed in unison: **"We've got it!"**

"By my banana, I've got it, too!"

Hercule cried.

**"Me, too!"** added

Petunia. "You recognize  
it, don't you, G?"

Suddenly, it came to me.



**BUT OF COURSE!**

**CLUE 5**

**Do you recognize the place  
drawn on the map?**



# THE LAST PIECE OF THE PUZZLE

The mystery location on the map was Pablo Mousehasso's very own villa!

**"WE DON'T HAVE A MINUTE TO SPARE!"** Hercule exclaimed.

We hurried outside to a **TAXI**.

When we **arrived** at the villa, the





butler opened the door.

“The master is not at home,” he told us. “He’s at a ceremony receiving the **RODENT OF THE YEAR** award.”

“That’s perfect,” I said. “We aren’t here to see him anyway.”

“Let’s hurry!” Benjamin said as he **slipped** past the butler.

“Hey, wait a minute,” **protested** the butler. “You can’t just come in here!”

“You have to let us in,” Buggy insisted. “Someone’s in **trouble**!”

The butler didn’t know what to say. We just walked by him into the villa. Then we used the **MAP** to find the spot that was marked with an **X**.



We ended up in a small **STORAGE ROOM** in the cellar.

“Look, there’s a **little door** down there!” exclaimed Bugsy.

We opened the door and found ourselves in front of a **WALL** made of bricks, some with markings numbering





them from **one** to **nine**.

Oh, for the love of cheese! We were so close to solving the mystery, but the wall was **blocking** us.

“I’ve got it!” Benjamin exclaimed suddenly. He **PULLED** the piece of canvas with the eight numbers from his pocket. Then he **pushed** on different bricks. The wall **moved** to reveal a secret passage. A small, skinny rodent appeared before our **eyes**.

“Finally you’re here!” he said.

## **CLUE 6**

**How was Benjamin able to open the door to the secret passage?**



# SALVADOR RATI

The rodent explained the whole story.

“My name is **Salvador Rati**,” he told us. “I met Pablo Mousechasso many years ago, when he was **KICKED OUT**

of the New Mouse City **art school**. He was a charming mouse, but he didn’t know what to do with a **PAINTBRUSH** between his paws! I, on the other hand, was talented but very **shy**. So he made me a proposal: I





would create paintings that he would sign and sell, and we would split the profits.”

“What a **cheater**!” Hercule exclaimed.

“My **PAINTINGS** did very well,” Rati continued, “but Mousehasso was the one becoming **FAMOUSE**. He kept asking for more and more of the money. When I told him that I was tired of the lie, he locked me in his villa and forced me to work for **FREE**.”

“That’s awful!” Benjamin exclaimed.

The rest of us nodded in agreement.

“It’s time to expose this **HOAX**,” Hercule announced. “And I have a plan!”



# RODENT OF THE YEAR

We arrived just in time at the theater where the **RODENT OF THE YEAR** awards ceremony was being held. The **presentation** had already begun.

**Hercule** disappeared backstage with Rati while the rest of us sat in the last row.





“And now, the moment you’ve all been waiting for: the **RODENT OF THE YEAR** award!” the emcee announced.

The **hostess** turned over the envelope.

“The most important rodent in New Mouse City this year is . . .

**Salvador Rati?!”**



A **murmur** spread through the room.

I don’t know how Hercule had done it, but he had managed to change the winner’s name at the last **minute!**



Pablo Mousehasso stormed onstage,  
as **RED** as a tomato.

“Who dares to steal my **prize**?”  
he bellowed.

“I do!” Rati announced as he stepped  
onto the stage as well.

Mousehasso gasped.





“How did you manage to **escape**?” he asked. “Uh, I mean . . . who are you?”

“I’m a real **PAINTER**, not a con artist like you!” Rati said proudly.

“**THAT’S NOT TRUE!**” Mousehasso replied. “I’m a great painter!”

“Then prove it,” Rati said calmly. “Right now, in front of everyone. You will **paint** my portrait, and I will **paint** yours!”

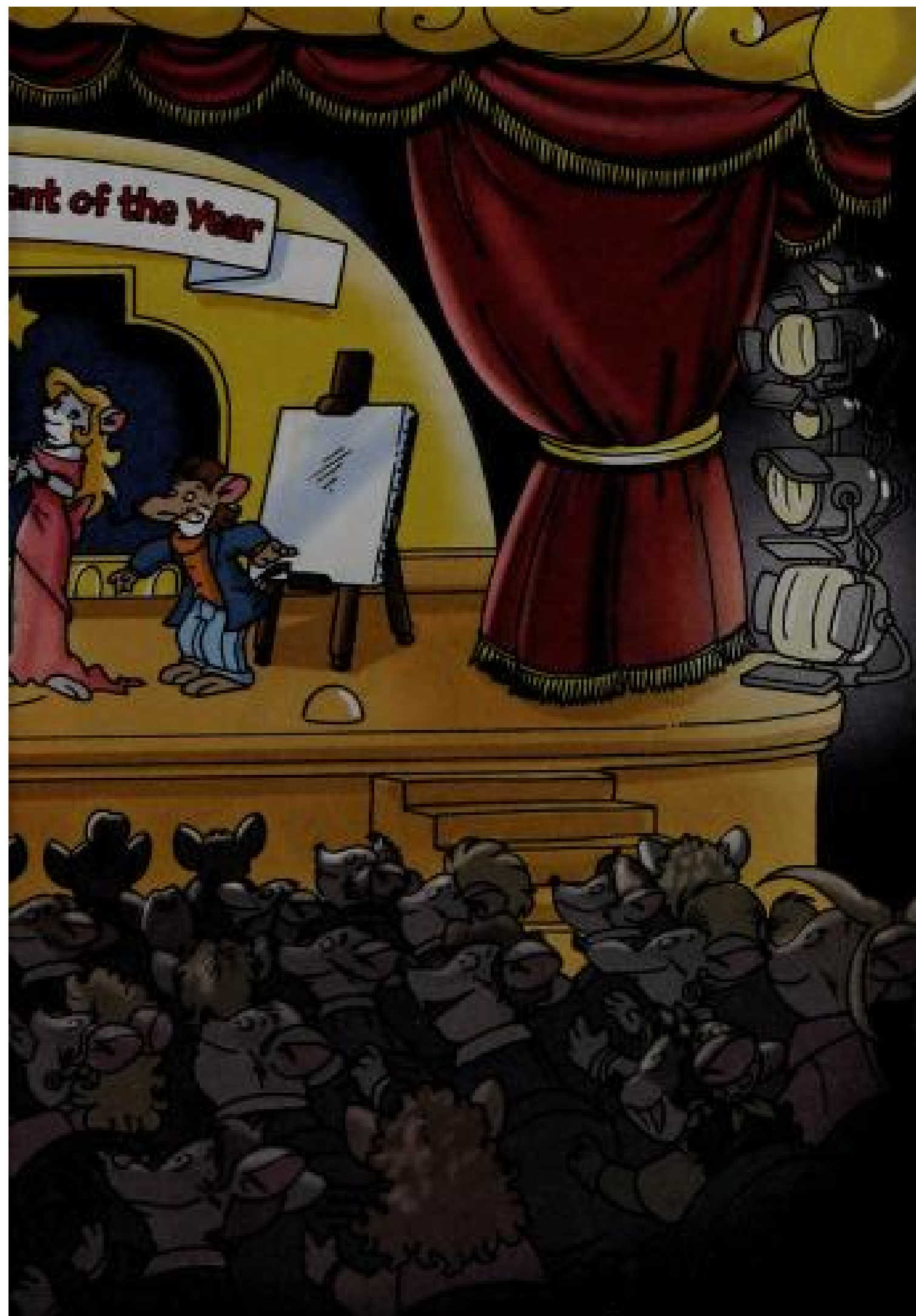
Mousehasso turned as pale as a slice of mozzarella, but there was no way around it. He had to agree to the **challenge**!

**Rati**, on the other paw, seemed very sure of himself as the emcee set up two easels and two canvases on the stage.











With trembling paws, Mousehasso began to paint. The crowd **murmured** softly.

This was the result:



*PORTRAIT OF SALVADOR RATI  
PAINTED BY PABLO MOUSEHASO*



Then it was Rati's turn. He picked up a brush and in a flash painted a **splendid** portrait of Mousehasso. The crowd broke out in **applause**.



PORTRAIT OF PABLO MOUSEHASSO  
PAINTED BY SALVADOR RATI



# THE TRUE STORY OF SALVADOR RATI

Salvador Rati was given the **RODENT OF THE YEAR** award, and Pablo Mousehasso went to jail, where he began taking a painting class.

*The Rodent's Gazette* published an exclusive story about Salvador Rati, and it was an enormouse success!

To **celebrate**, I invited all my friends to my house for a party. Rati was the guest of honor.

It was an **unforgettable** night!



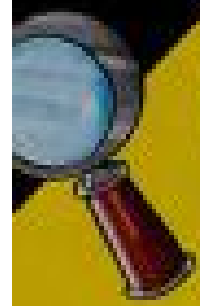


THE RODENT'S  
**THE TRUE STORY  
OF SALVADOR RATTI**

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 L-100-006  
 L-100-007  
 L-100-008  
 L-100-009  
 L-100-010







# YOU'RE THE INVESTIGATOR!

**DID YOU FIGURE OUT THE CLUES?**

- 1** Why did Master Mousehasso's sentence seem familiar to Geronimo?

Mousehasso said that in the past he had to exchange his paintings for bread and cheese. When Hercule gave Geronimo the bad painting, he told him he'd gotten it for bread and cheese. Hercule must have gotten it from Mousehasso!

- 2** What did Hercule Poirat notice about the two paintings?

The initials of the signatures on the two paintings are identical: *P.M.* and *Pablo Mousehasso*.

- 3** Try to solve the anagram. What sentence do you get?

The sentence is *Buy the black letters*.

- 4** What did Benjamin see in the painting?

He saw a black letter in the white signature.

- 5** Did you recognize the place drawn on the map?

It is Pablo Mousehasso's villa!

- 6** How was Benjamin able to open the door to the secret passage?

Benjamin pushed the numbered bricks in the sequence of the eight numbers on the canvas.



# HOW MANY QUESTIONS DID YOU ANSWER CORRECTLY?

**ALL 5 CORRECT:** You are a **SUPER-SQUEAKY INVESTIGATOR!**



**FROM 2 TO 4 CORRECT:** You are a **SUPER INVESTIGATOR!** You'll get that added squeak soon!



**LESS THAN 2 CORRECT:** You are a **GOOD INVESTIGATOR!** Keep practicing to get super-squeaky!



## Farewell until the next mystery!

*Geronimo Stilton*



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

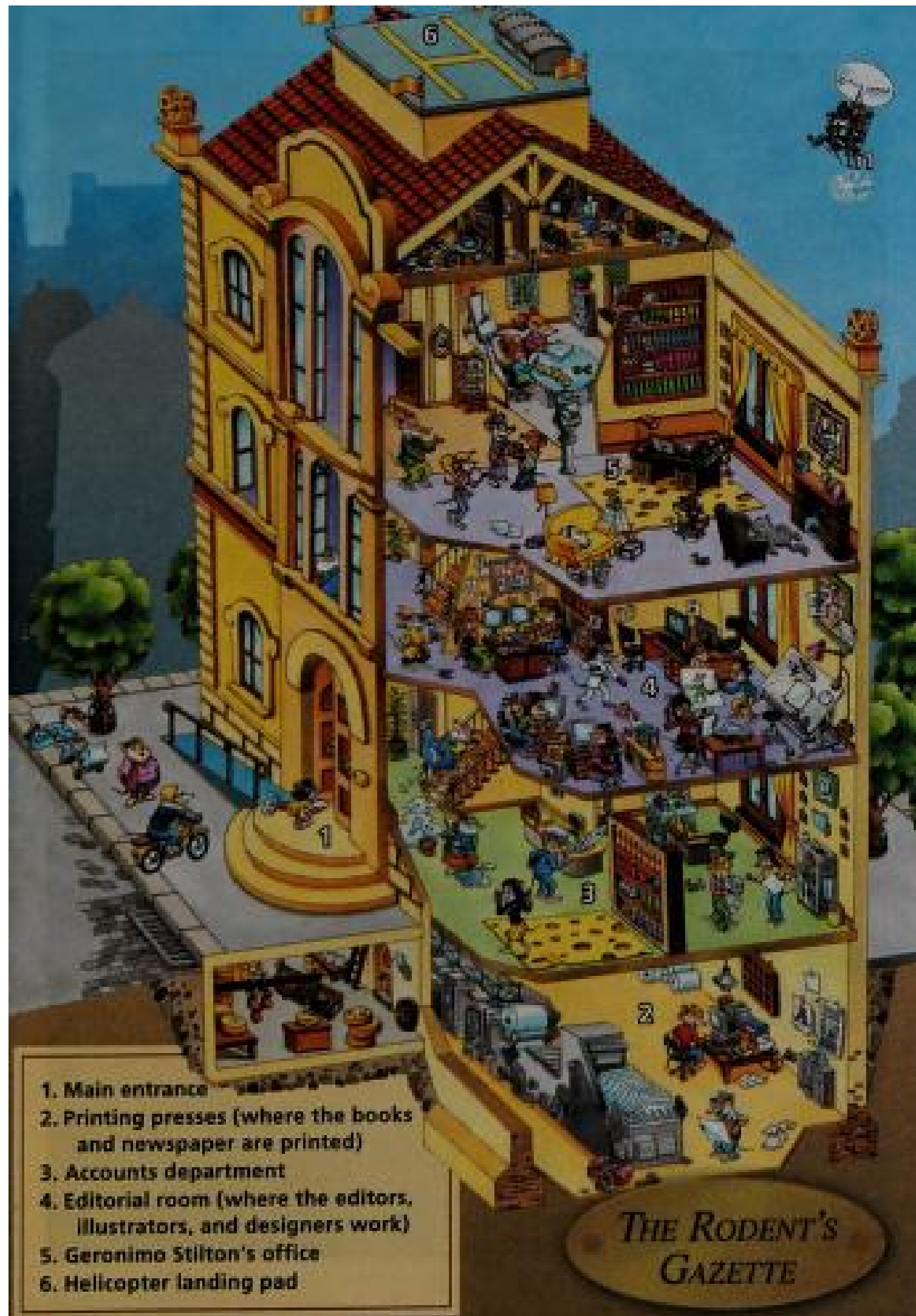


Born in New Mouse City, Mouse Island, **GERONIMO STILTON** is Rattus Emeritus of Mousomorphic Literature and of Neo-Ratonic Comparative Philosophy. For the past twenty years, he has been running *The Rodent's Gazette*, New Mouse City's most widely read daily newspaper.

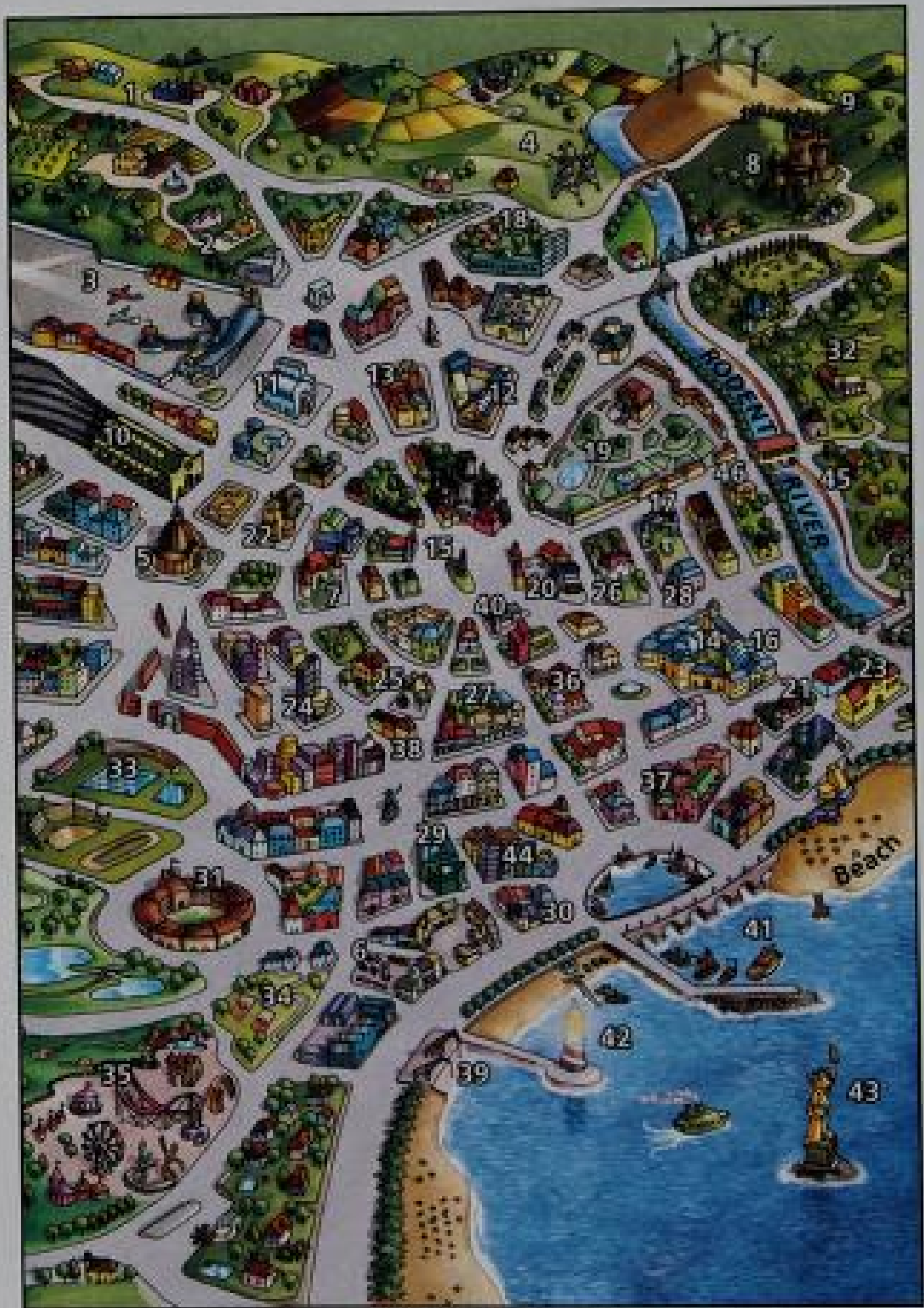
Stilton was awarded the Ratitzer Prize for his scoops on *The Curse of the Cheese Pyramid* and *The Search for Sunken Treasure*. He has also received the Andersen 2000 Prize for Personality of the Year. One of his bestsellers won the 2002 eBook Award for world's best ratlings' electronic book. His works have been published all over the globe.

In his spare time, Mr. Stilton collects antique cheese rinds and plays golf. But what he most enjoys is telling stories to his nephew Benjamin.







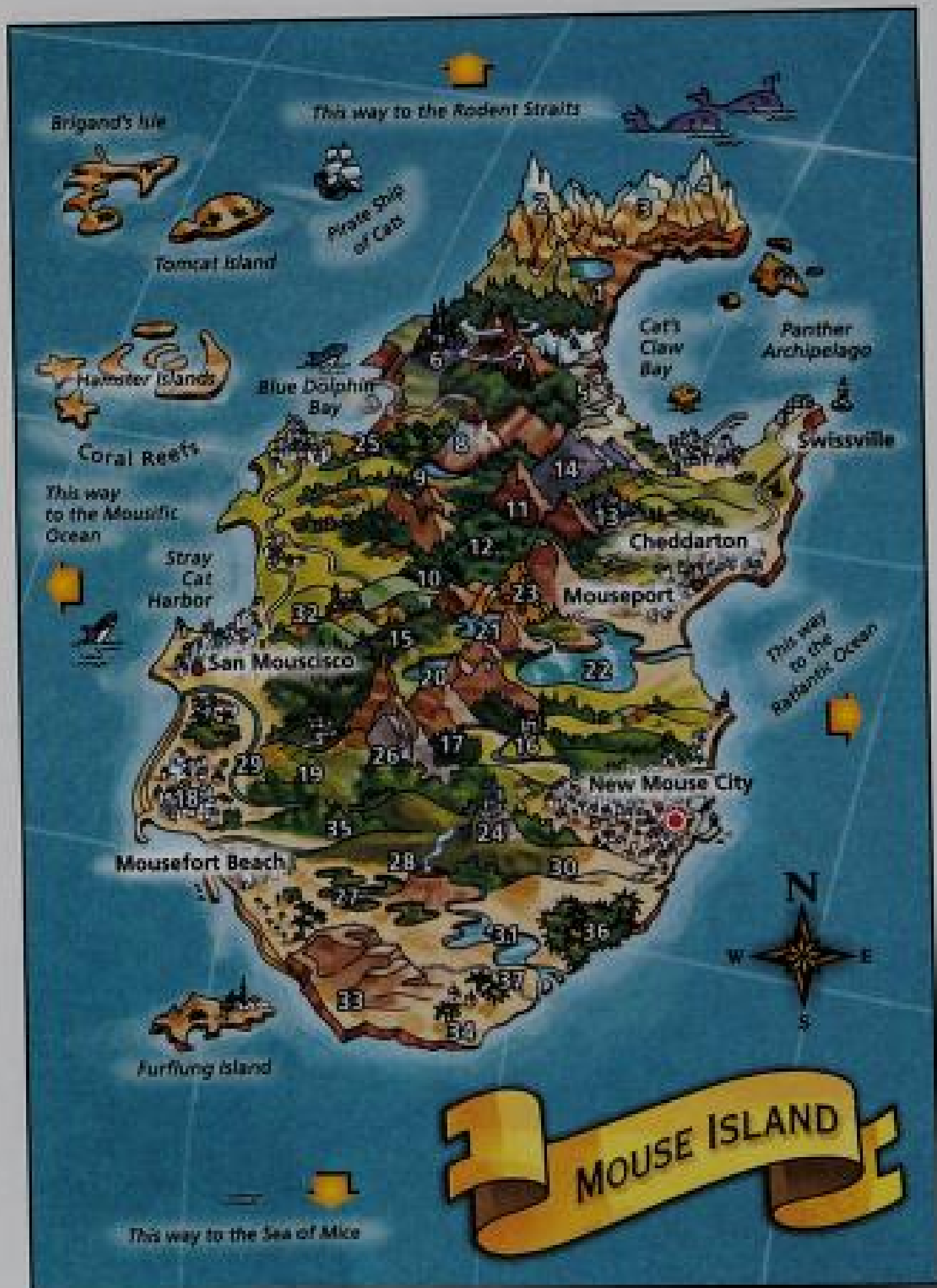




# Map of New Mouse City

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Industrial Zone                     | 25. <i>The Rodent's Gazette</i>     |
| 2. Cheese Factories                    | 26. Trap's House                    |
| 3. Angorat International Airport       | 27. Fashion District                |
| 4. WRAT Radio and Television Station   | 28. The Mouse House Restaurant      |
| 5. Cheese Market                       | 29. Environmental Protection Center |
| 6. Fish Market                         | 30. Harbor Office                   |
| 7. Town Hall                           | 31. Mousidon Square Garden          |
| 8. Snotnose Castle                     | 32. Golf Course                     |
| 9. The Seven Hills of Mouse Island     | 33. Swimming Pool                   |
| 10. Mouse Central Station              | 34. Blushing Meadow Tennis Courts   |
| 11. Trade Center                       | 35. Curlyfur Island Amusement Park  |
| 12. Movie Theater                      | 36. Geronimo's House                |
| 13. Gym                                | 37. Historic District               |
| 14. Catnegie Hall                      | 38. Public Library                  |
| 15. Singing Stone Plaza                | 39. Shipyard                        |
| 16. The Gouda Theater                  | 40. Thea's House                    |
| 17. Grand Hotel                        | 41. New Mouse Harbor                |
| 18. Mouse General Hospital             | 42. Luna Lighthouse                 |
| 19. Botanical Gardens                  | 43. The Statue of Liberty           |
| 20. Cheap Junk for Less (Trap's store) | 44. Hercule Poirat's Office         |
| 21. Parking Lot                        | 45. Petunia Pretty Paws's House     |
| 22. Mouseum of Modern Art              | 46. Grandfather William's House     |
| 23. University and Library             |                                     |
| 24. <i>The Daily Rat</i>               |                                     |







# Map of Mouse Island

- |                           |                                 |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Big Ice Lake           | 21. Lake Lakelake               |
| 2. Frozen Fur Peak        | 22. Lake Lakelakelake           |
| 3. Slipperyslopes Glacier | 23. Cheddar Crag                |
| 4. Coldcreeps Peak        | 24. Cannycat Castle             |
| 5. Ratzikistan            | 25. Valley of the Giant Sequoia |
| 6. Transratania           | 26. Cheddar Springs             |
| 7. Mount Vamp             | 27. Sulfurous Swamp             |
| 8. Roastedrat Volcano     | 28. Old Reliable Geyser         |
| 9. Brimstone Lake         | 29. Vole Vale                   |
| 10. Poopedcat Pass        | 30. Ravingrat Ravine            |
| 11. Stinko Peak           | 31. Gnat Marshes                |
| 12. Dark Forest           | 32. Munster Highlands           |
| 13. Vain Vampires Valley  | 33. Mousehara Desert            |
| 14. Goose Bumps Gorge     | 34. Oasis of the Sweaty Camel   |
| 15. The Shadow Line Pass  | 35. Cabbagehead Hill            |
| 16. Penny Pincher Castle  | 36. Rattytrap Jungle            |
| 17. Nature Reserve Park   | 37. Rio Mosquito                |
| 18. Las Ratayas Marinas   |                                 |
| 19. Fossil Forest         |                                 |
| 20. Lake Lake             |                                 |





Dear mouse friends,  
Thanks for reading, and farewell  
until the next mystery!



Geronimo Stilton

**CASE  
CLOSED!**





## MINI MYSTERIES

Hello, mouse friends! Join me, Geronimo Stilton, in solving this whisker-licking-good mystery. Find clues along with me as you read. Together, we'll be super-squeaky investigators!

### THE MOUSE HOAX

I had been invited to an exhibition of the painter Pablo Mousehasso's artwork. He was the most famous painter on Mouse Island, so I was excited to meet him! He even offered me an exclusive interview. Little did I know that his paintings hid a secret. Would my friends and I be able to uncover it?

This edition



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